

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. DISTRIBUTION OF CHITAL *AXIS AXIS* (ERXLEBEN 1777) IN BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE, ARGENTINA

(With one text-figure)

Chital (*Axis axis*) was first introduced in Argentina for sport hunting in 1928 and 1930 in Magdalena, Buenos Aires province (Navas 1987). The species became well established in the country, and there have been records from Formosa, La Pampa, Neuquen, Cordoba, Santa Fe, Rio Negro, Entre Rios, Tucuman and San

Luis provincès (Chebez 1994). The range expansion of chital has been assisted by translocation to new areas, mainly as a result of commercial interest from game ranches. Buenos Aires province manages chital as a big game species, and also permits shooting to control populations.

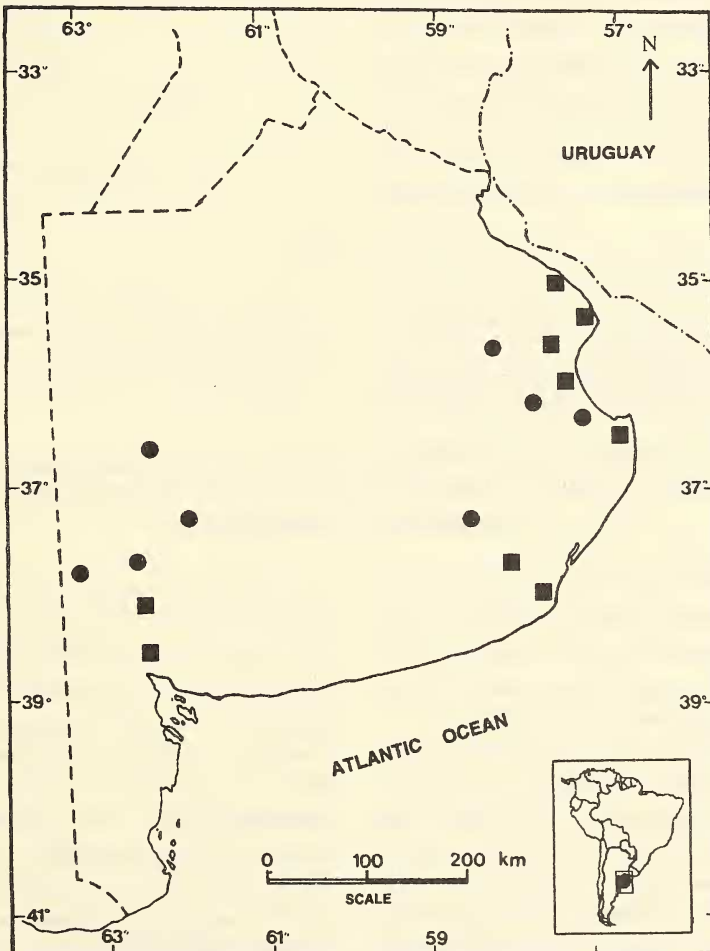


Fig. 1: Distribution of chital (*Axis axis* Erxleben 1777) in Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, South America. ■ Previous records (Navas 1987; Galliari *et al.* 1991) ● New records

From 1995 to 1997, we completed some field surveys to determine the ranges of introduced ungulates. We also compiled all literature and unpublished information from the local Wildlife Department to determine the past and current distribution and status of *Axis axis* and other exotic ungulates in Buenos Aires province.

In the study area, the species distribution is closely associated with *Celtis tala* forests (Rio de La Plata estuarine area), and with the two mountain chains (Tandilia and Ventania systems) in the province.

We confirmed chital occurrence in Magdalena, Chascomus, Castelli, Tornquist, Bahia Blanca, Gral. Lavalle and Berisso (Galliari *et al.* 1991) and also in General Pueyrredon and Balcarce departments (Navas 1987). Additionally, there have been new records for the species at General Belgrano, General Madariaga,

Tordillo, Tandil, Coronel Suarez, Guamini and Dolores (Fig. 1).

It is necessary to delineate distribution to study the biology and assess the impact of chital on local flora, particularly the indigenous *tala* (*Celtis tala*) forests and pampas grasslands.

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BRUNO CARPINETTI

Dirección de Administración
de Recursos Naturales,
Ministerio de Asuntos Agrarios
de la Prov. de Bs. Aires,
Calle 71 N° 488, La Plata (1900), Argentina.

MARIANO L. MERINO

Sección Mastozoología,
Departamento Zoología Vertebrados,
Museo de la Plata.
Paseo del Bosque s/n (1900) La Plata
Argentina. CICPBA.

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2. TAKIN *BUDORCAS TAXICOLOR* AT MENLA RESERVE FOREST (3,050 M), EAST SIKKIM: A WESTWARD RANGE EXTENSION AND OBSERVATIONS OF UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR

The Mishmi takin *Budorcas taxicolor* Hodgson was finally sighted in Sikkim in June 1999. For decades there were rumours of a solitary, large mammal locally called 'Tarkin' by the Lachungpa tribals of north Sikkim.

In recent times, the animal was first reported from Lema (c. 2,400 m) in Lachung, north Sikkim in September 1976. In May-June 1984, a villager Mr. Jorgay Lachungpa told me that an animal called 'Tarkin' occasionally comes across the Tembawa ridge adjoining Dombang valley, probably from the Chumbi valley to the Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary area (c. 3,400 m), north Sikkim.

During the All India Tiger Census, December 1993, conducted by Mr. C. Lachungpa Divisional Forest Officer (Wildlife) of the Department of Forests, Environment and Wildlife, he sighted a large herbivorous animal from afar in a dense area of Menmoitso Reserve Forest (c. 2,500 m) in east Sikkim. His photograph, taken with a normal lens, showed vaguely a large animal like a bear or yak, but due to the distance it was not possible to identify it. It was suspected to be either a gaur *Bos gaurus* or Sikkim stag (Shou) *Cervus elaphus wallichi* Cuvier, possibly strayed over from Bhutan or the Chumbi valley. In July 1998, there was an